

GOVERNOR NAMES NEW ARIZONA AGENCY LEADERS

PHOENIX – Governor Janet Napolitano has announced the appointment of two new state agency directors. Colonel Joey Strickland will serve as the new head of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (DVS); and January Contreras has been named Acting Director of the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS).

Colonel Joey Strickland has already begun his new duties at Veterans Affairs. Until recently, he was the Deputy Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs (LDVA), overseeing the daily operations of the agency, including supervision of five nursing care homes for veterans. Strickland served previously as the Executive Director of LDVA; Director of the Governor's Office for Indian Affairs in Louisiana; Executive Director of the Louisiana 'Troops to Teachers' Program; and as a high school academic counselor. Colonel Strickland is a 28-year veteran of the United States Army, retiring in 1994 after a distinguished career that included two tours of duty in Vietnam. Strickland is a fluent Spanish-speaker, who is a candidate for a doctoral degree in Public Policy.

Strickland replaces General Richard "Gregg" Maxon, who left DVS at the end of June. General Maxon is also a distinguished military and naval veteran, having served 35 years in the Army, the Arizona National Guard and as a Judge Advocate for the U.S. Naval Reserve. Before taking over at DVS, Maxon was Assistant Adjutant General for the Arizona National Guard.

"Gregg Maxon's contribution was tremendously valuable to Arizona," said Governor Napolitano. "He stepped in at a particularly challenging time and led DVS with great skill and integrity. He is missed."

At DHS, the Governor has named January Contreras to the job of Acting Director. Contreras replaces Susan Gerard, who has resigned. Since 2006, Contreras has been the Governor's policy adviser for health-related issues, overseeing work at DHS and at the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). Prior to joining the Governor's office, Contreras was a Deputy Director at AHCCCS, handling intergovernmental relations with the state legislature, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, tribal governments, and state agencies on issues of importance regarding health care. During her time at AHCCCS, Contreras spent a year as the agency's Chief Legislative Liaison. Contreras was an Assistant Attorney General for Arizona, focusing on criminal cases related to AHCCCS fraud and other financial crimes. She previously also worked as a prosecutor for Maricopa County, where she handled drug, robbery, theft and other criminal cases.

Contreras is an attorney who graduated from the University of Arizona College of Law in 1996, having also earned her Bachelor's degree at the U of A.

As part of her work for the Governor, Contreras serves as a member of the Governor's Children's Cabinet, and on the Arizona Health-e Connection and Arizona Workforce Data Center leadership committees.

"Health care in the United States, and in Arizona, is a stunningly complex policy area. January has complete command of those issues and brings tremendous practical experience in dealing with them on a daily basis," said Governor Napolitano. "That, combined with her experience here at the State Capitol,

makes her perfectly positioned to lead DHS.”

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